

Remembering our Veterans – NHB/NMRTC Bremerton Staff Members

Chronicles of a Veteran - From WWII to the Korean War to Vietnam War

By Douglas H Stutz, Naval Hospital Bremerton Public Affairs – With the theme for Veteran's Day 2024 as 'A Legacy of Loyalty and Service,' let's project back to recount a legacy of service with an adopted son of Naval Hospital Bremerton.

Retired U.S. Navy Chief Storekeeper Gene Hanson was just 17 years old when he started his Navy career. The Wisconsin native was born in 1925, enlisted in 1942 and as a teenager served aboard ammo ships and destroyers as a gunner's mate. He continued on in life for another seven-plus decades, passing at age 92 in 2017.

Along with retired Chief Boatswain Mate Jerry Irvine, age 85, who died that same year, Hanson was unofficially considered part of Naval Hospital Bremerton and officially attached to the command's Chief Petty Officer Association.

The long-time Bremerton resident – followed in passing by wife Adele in 2018 – was a font of Navy honor, history, and heritage. His 22 years in uniform spanned three tumultuous decades with involvement in three wars, from the North Atlantic and South Pacific in World War Two to the waters off the Korean Peninsula during the Korean War, to the South China Sea in the Vietnam War.

Hanson's naval career was a continuous haze-gray underway evolution. He served on cargo ship SS Frederick L (DAU 851), cargo ship Media (AK 83), attack transport ship USS Calvert (APA 32), aircraft carrier USS Midway (CVA 41), landing ship medium USS Oceanside (LSM 175), USS Rogers (DD 876) and finally, USS Gridley (DLG 21).

Anyone asking Hanson about steaming in the cold North Atlantic during those early dark days of the Second World War would find out that whoever declared that salt water doesn't freeze had never ridden in a slow moving convoy out of England.

"They'd find out the truth of the matter, if they made it through," alluded Hanson, noting that in rough weather, there were few places inside an ammo ship that the sea couldn't reach.

Wet gear never dried. Dampness would spread through a compartment.



Even in good conditions and decent weather, getting a convoy of up to several hundred ships across the Atlantic was a major challenge without a collision or some other mishap.

“It was worse in winter,” remembered Hanson.

The main convoy route cut through a region of the North Atlantic that had some of the world’s foulest weather for any mariner to handle. Ships that were encased in ice or blinded by driving sleet and rain had to struggle to keep their place in the formation. Seas would run up to 60 feet high and break the backs of some ships and smash lifeboats to splinters. Men who were blown or washed overboard often froze to death in seconds.

“The ship would complain every time we went through a wave,” Hanson said.

Even in the most arduous conditions, peak alertness had to be maintained at all times. At night, crew kept bone-chilling vigils, searching the white waves for a conning tower of a German U-Boat submarine.

Hanson’s watches would be 10 hours or more.

It was tedious. and boring,” said Hanson.

The strain and exhaustion were mingled with a combination of fear and fatalism.

The year Hanson joined the Navy, 120 ships were sunk by German U-boats in May and another 119 in June.

“We had a submarine surface in the middle of us once. We all opened fire. We did our best,” remembered Hanson.

There was even one convoy voyage that started from Liverpool, England, got rerouted, and wound up all the way in Calcutta, India, supplying needed ordnance to troops fighting the Imperial Japanese Army in Burma.

Another trip took him from the south of France, with Victory in Europe announced, to south of Manila in the Philippines, where his and 2,000 other ammo ships waited for the orders to invade the Japanese mainland.

Orders that would mean more hard fighting.



Those orders never came.

Hanson instead wound up in Shanghai, China, 1946, as part of what was called the ‘magic carpet fleet.’ Those were ships that were assigned to transport troops home at the end of the war, including former prisoner of war and wounded service members. He even recalls pulling into a port on the Manchurian coast of northern China at the time.



“There was an old ‘China Fleet’ retiree there who had a bar. Boy was he glad to see a Navy ship pull in,” recalled Hanson.

His ship and many others loaded up as many troops from the far Pacific as they could for the long voyage home. When his ship docked in New Jersey, there was no celebration. No fanfare. No pomp and circumstance. The big celebration was up in New York City. A young petty officer like Hanson had done his duty and survived, which was more than many could say about those years of war.

“Every day was dangerous,” explained Gene. “The sea was dangerous. The U-boats in the Atlantic and the submarines in the Pacific were dangerous. Hell, being on an ammo ship was dangerous. But after a couple trips, it didn’t bother anyone anymore.”

He was demobilized. But after 30 days, with jobs scarce, he came back to the career he knew. A handful of years later, Hanson was off the Korean Peninsula. The three long years of warfare in Korea claimed an estimated three million casualties – including approximately 40,000 U.S. troops killed – remains in a 70-year stalemate between South Korea and North Korea.

Hanson was a ‘tincan’ [destroyer] Sailor on USS Rogers (DD 876) steaming off the Korean coast in 1951, providing naval gunfire support, carrying out patrol missions, engaging in blockading maneuvers and helping evacuate wounded personnel. The various assignments of the Rogers and other destroyers presaged future Navy efforts in the following decade.



According to James A. Field, in writing his, “History of U.S. Naval Operations: Korea,” in Naval History and Heritage Command, “The Korean War was a watershed in the 20th-century history of the United States Navy. During that conflict and for the next 50 years, U.S. naval forces conducted operations that maintained control of the world's oceans and brought sea power to bear against enemies ashore.

Freed by friendly control of the sea from the threat of hostile fleets, American carrier squadrons, shore bombardment ships, and amphibious units engaged North Korean and Chinese Communist forces on the Korean peninsula. Fleet amphibious forces turned the tide of battle in 1950 at Inchon and threatened the enemy's vulnerable coastal flanks for the rest of the war. The Seventh Fleet ensured that American ground forces got the men and supplies they needed to fight and win far from American shores. The Korean War experience helped the Navy fight more effectively during the later conflict in Southeast Asia and elsewhere.”

The next decade brought him further south.

It was in 1961 when then President John F. Kennedy increased the number of American military advisors to South Vietnam. Along with them came military supplies which Hanson helped provide escort duty and fire support on a cargo ship and aircraft ferry ship taking helicopters.

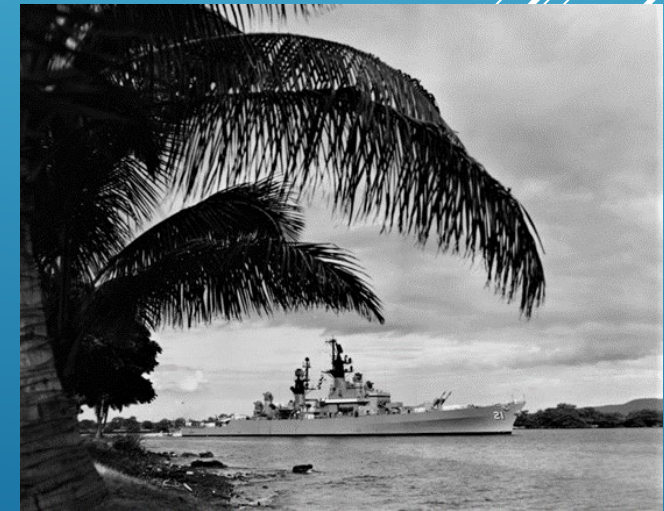
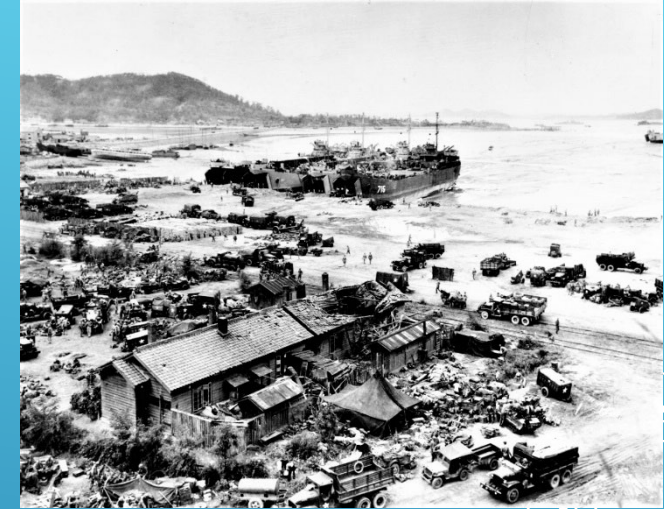
“Back in ‘62 most of us didn’t even know where Vietnam was, let alone having heard of it,” Hanson related, steaming from Subic to Saigon, a world away from his home, until his last ship the Gridley.

Hanson retired at Long Beach Naval Station, California in 1964. It was him and approximately half a dozen more. There was no ceremony. He collected his pay and got his new ID card.

Out of Hanson’s 22 years of naval service, 18 were ‘haze-gray’ underway. The convoys and deployments he went on are simply too numerous for him to accurately remember.

He returned to Bremerton, where he’d been before. He went to work at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard as a ship-fitter, completing another career there. He knew Bremerton as a good military town.

“It still is,” he attests.



When Hanson returned from each war, there was no red carpet. He went out of his way to make sure that didn't happen again on his watch.

When NHB began sending waves of doctors, nurses, hospital corpsmen and support staff deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, Hanson was there to render support as they departed.

It didn't matter if it was well before 4 a.m. He was there with well-wishes and care packages.



He was there every time individual augmentees returned from deployment. Even during his waning years, Hanson remained active. He even proudly bestowed a ship's plaque and a few other keepsakes from being a plank owner on USS Gridley (DLG-21) in 1964 to the current USS Gridley (DDG 101) homeported at Naval Station Everett.

Naval Base Kitsap, USS Gridley and NHB chief petty officers would also go out of their way to stay in touch until his passing, as Hanson did from the 1940s to 1960s and long afterwards.





446th Security
Forces
#defensorfortis

Tech. Sgt. Brian C. Mafnas, USAF Security Forces, MRZR Tactical Driving, Nov. 2019 - Joint Base Lewis McChord.



The 'Healing Hands – Warrior Hearts Board in 2006 featured up to 90-100 staff members deployed



U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Marquita Hooks, 2005, 1st Infantry Division, Wurzburg, Germany...back in the day



Amy Salzsieder, occupation health registered nurse, in Kandahar, 2014, with a group of Activated Reservists,. “they’re from literally all over. I literally put my trust in them for my life and the lift of our patients. They drove the bus during mass casualties on the flight line, among other daily duties, such as lab tech, x-ray tech, physical therapy tech, admin and computer techs. They were all happy to be there, despite working 36-hour shifts at times...and (right) Packers fans really do travel well...



Jackson Meeker, from rappel training in Tallahassee, Fla, 2016 to jumping into Jordan later than year...and engaged as a young Lt. in training in the Virginia countryside, circa 2014.



*HMC (SW/FMF) Casey
Pruett, as IDC during an
UNREP off the Somali coast
circa 2009, although we
can't confirm nor deny
that...*





*Pauline Mau-Graham, 1st Runner Up,
Airman of Year, Dec. 1977, 41 Aerospace
Recovery Squadron, McClellan, AFB, Calif.*



LSC (SW) Daniel Blohm, assigned ~~USS~~ Carl Vinson. Circa 1999.



*Scott A. Arcand, remote FOB,
north of Bagram AB, Afghanistan,
2010.*

*Cmdr. Todd Saylor,
deployed to NATO
Role III Medical
Treatment Facility,
Kandahar Air Field,
Afghanistan, May
26, 2014*





Dr. Randall Kelley, travelled the outer islands of Yap for a month on a USCG Galveston Island for Operation Handclasp. “I was able to do medical visits while there, saw quite a few things that I would never see in the states. “It was a great trip. Even taught the Coasties how to fish.” (note: published photo)



*RMSN (SS/DV) Roger Smith, last
commissioned deployment and dive,
USS Grayback (SS-574), Subic Bay,
Republic of the Philippines*



*ETC (SS/SW/DV) Roger Smith, Commander Fleet Activities, Yokosuka,
Japan, back in the day...*

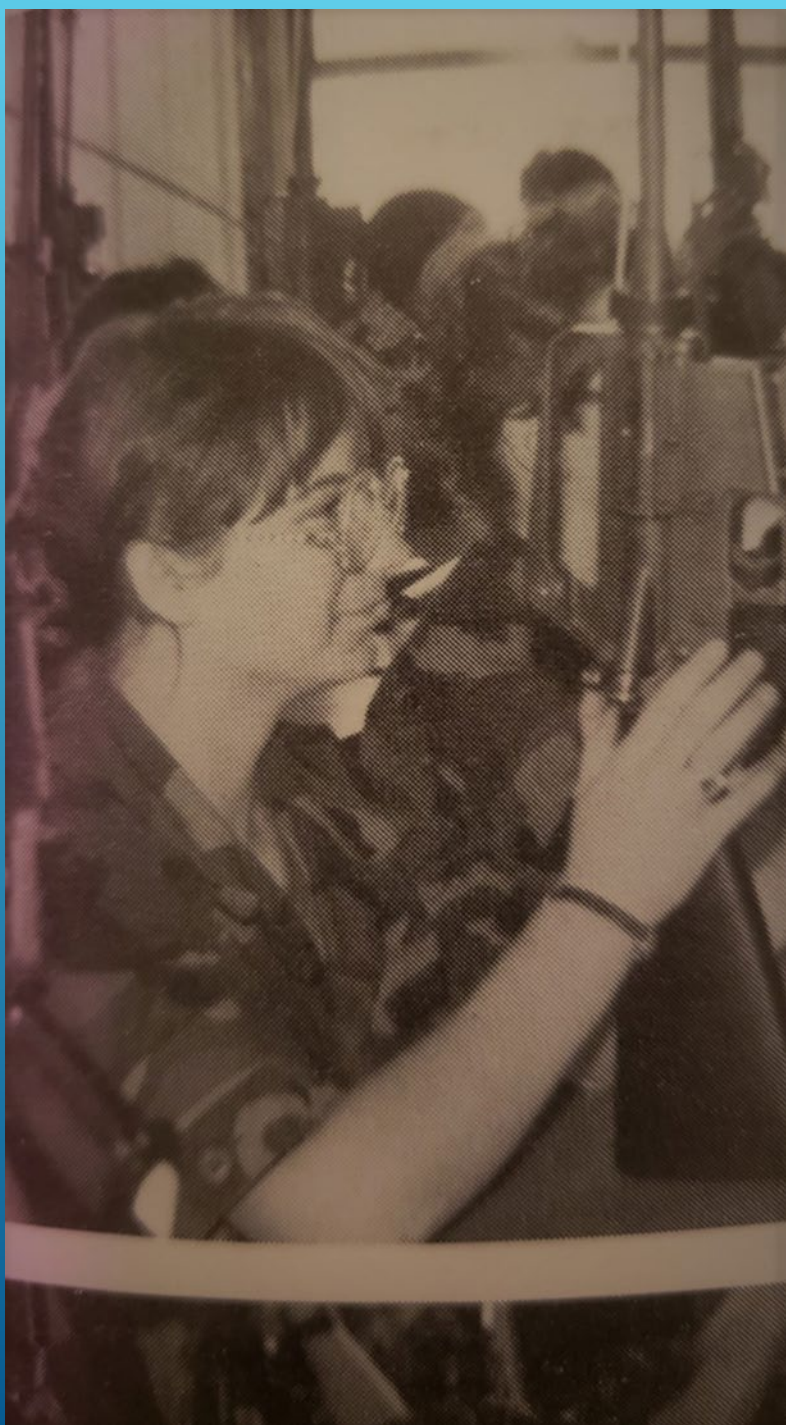


Debra Crawford, clockwise, is kneeling – and planting – at Camp Cropper in Baghdad, Iraq. But before that was training at Ft Jackson to learn what to do when dealing with an IED.

In 2009, a port call to Pattaya Thailand afforded the opportunity to take an elephant tour.

Below is rifle quals in 2007 before deploying...





*Rebecca
Drew, Army
Basic
Training, M16
familiarization
training, w/ A
Co. 1/26
Infantry Div.,
Fort Dix, New
Jersey, 1987*



*Pat Graves...back in the day, USS John C. Stennis (CVN 74),
circa 2007*

Dental Technician 1st Class Guy Gilman prepares a wax-up on a five unit porcelain fuse to metal bridge, which is the crucial initial step for making artificial teeth at Naval Dental Center, Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico, May 7, 1998.



Ens. Robert Tufts takes a photo-op pause as food service officer stationed on fast combat support ship USS Sacramento (AOE 1), circa 1986 during their deployment to the Western Pacific and welcomed onboard such notable luminaries' as the president of Pakistan and Vice President George Bush.



*HM2 (NAC) Eric Lembke
Training flight somewhere over the
North Cascades while attached to
Naval Air Station Whidbey Search
And Rescue, 2002 – 2006.*





JOC (SW) Douglas H Stutz, from the Kosovo road to Kuwait to K2 to the Kingdom of Saud...



Manny Balbas, circa 2006-07...Camp Arifjan, Kuwait



*Janine Wood, circa 2006, Naval Hospital
Bremerton!*



Elaine Huggins, 1st Lt., Fort Sam Houston, circa 1976...



*Dora Herman, HMC Fleet Marine Force,
Ret.!*

*Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Bob Mendoza, at Fort Magsaysay, Republic of the
Philippines, during the Philippines Amphibious Landing Exercise in 2009...*

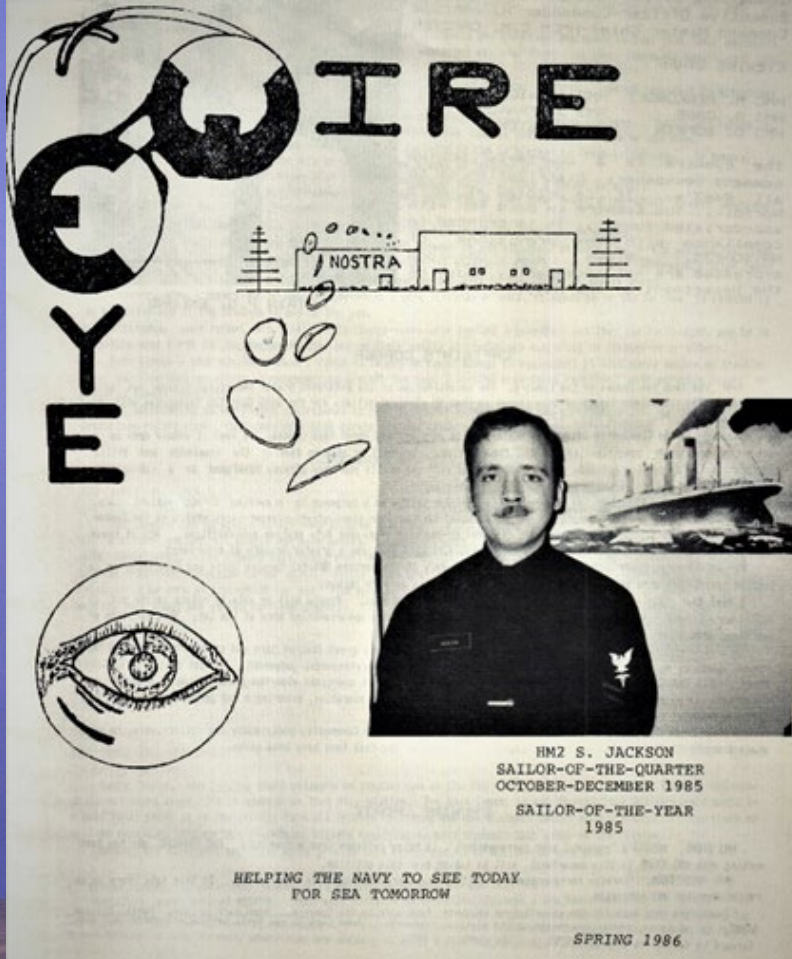




*Ernest Goad, back in the day...1996 ATV School,
Pensacola*



*HM2 Goad, Naval Hospital Oak Harbor Hospital Corps Ball
2010*



Steve Jackson, from 2005 (L) and 1986 (R). It should also be noted that he deployed Mar-Sept 03 as LCPO for Fleet Hospital Eight Surgical Services in support of OEF/OIF, dealing with an influx of incoming injured from the battlefields of Iraq.



David Smith, back in the day before retiring in 2005 and still putting service before self at BHC Bangor

Ryan McDonald, NMRTU Everett. Clinical psychologist, during his time support Operation Iraqi Freedom, circa February 2006, Fallujah, Iraq.



Charmel Gilbert, Columbus AFB, Miss., Aug 1996 to Aug 2000 Health Service Management – at the AF Ball (L) and Sheppard AFB Texas, Oct. 1996 for tech school.





Jeff Worrell, NMRTC Bremerton DMLSS SA from his time on the South Pacific island of Tonga in support of Pacific Partnership 2011



*Somewhere in the eastern
Atlantic, Feb. 2010, HMC
(SS/SW/AW) Allen Truhn,
USS Albany (SSN 753)*



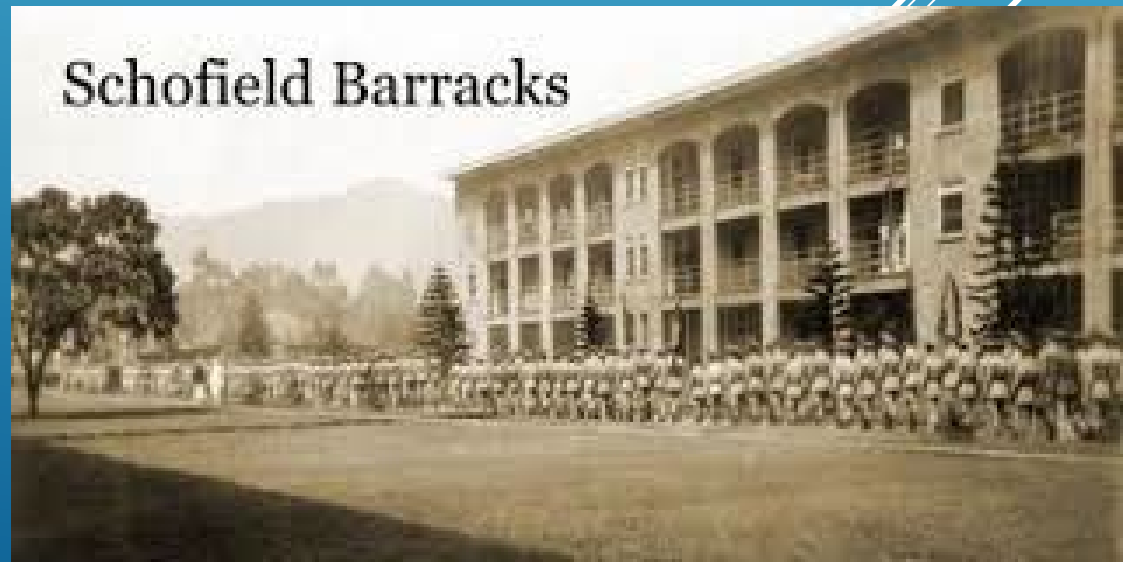
*April Dinucci, medical board coordinator,
back in the day as a hospital corpsman ready
from Naples Italy, circa 1998-99, to team
deployed settings...*





Army Specialist Janet Jones, Medical Battalion eye technician, stationed at Schofield Barrack, Hawai'i, 1985-88.

Schofield Barracks





Mary Kehrer, providing humanitarian assistance in the Dominican Republic, circa 2008.



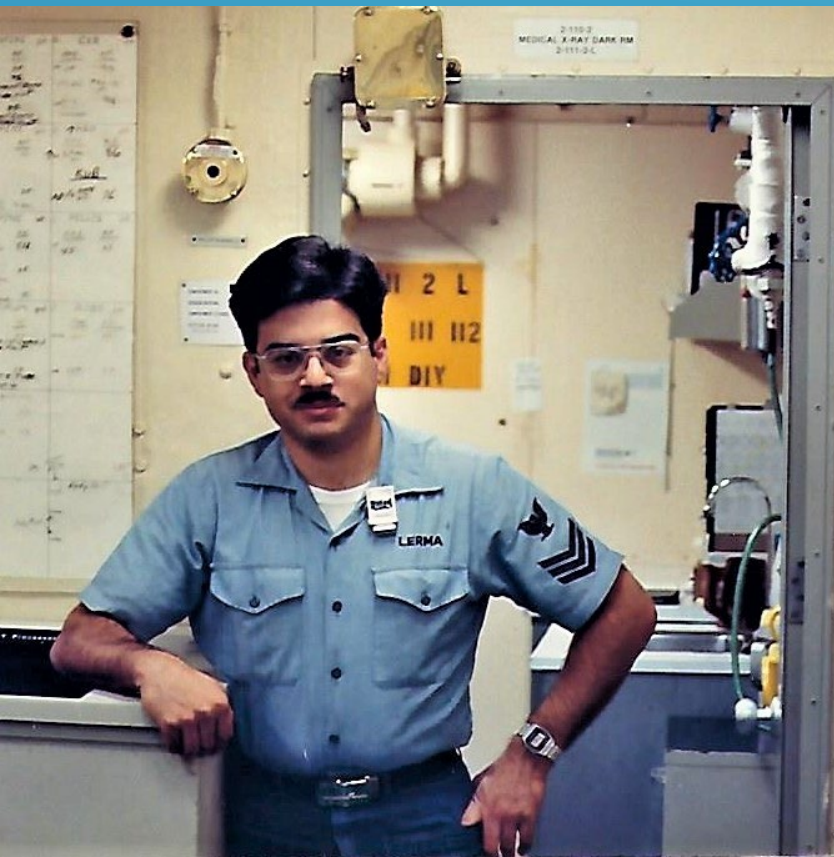
*Tara Pope,
Navy Recruit
Training
Command
(Great Lakes)
circa 1998*



*HMI Terry Lerma (R) Hawaii
Beachguard Det. circa 1989*



*USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70)
Medical Imaging '89*

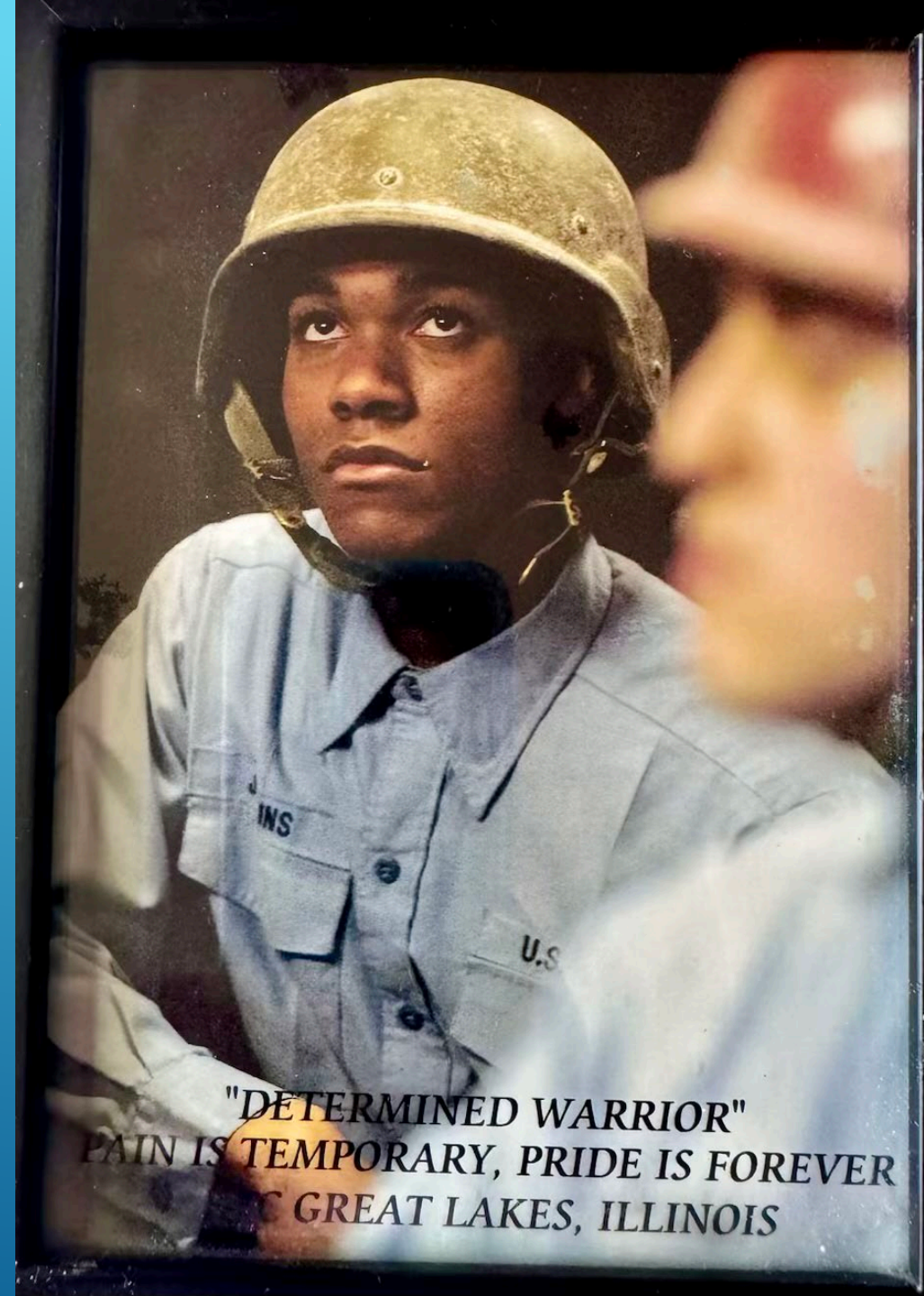


*Flight Deck ops, USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70) , off
the Aleutians, circa 1989*



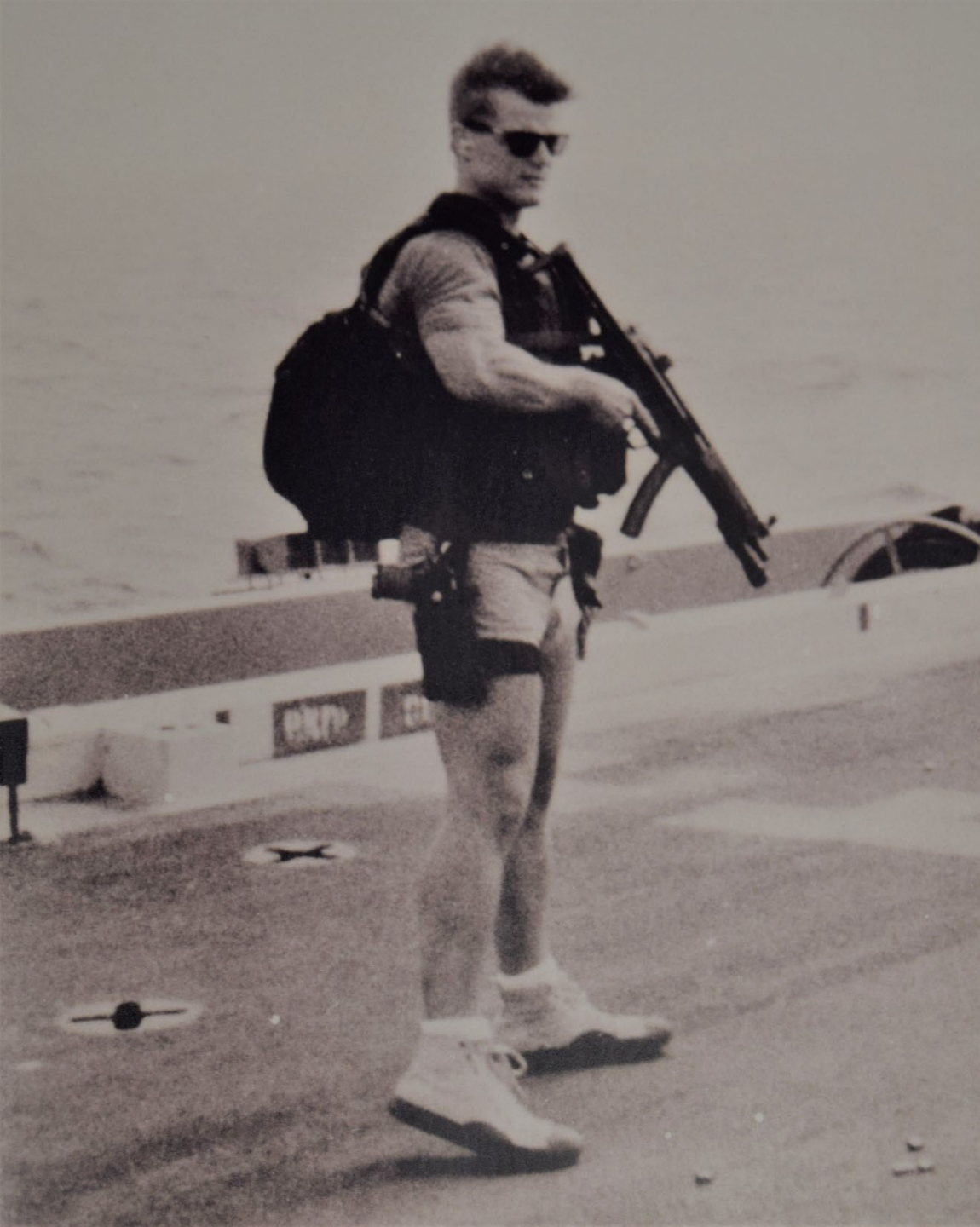
*Chief Hospital Corpsman Aia Jenkins from back in the day, Feb. 6, 2024,
at Recruit Training Command, Great Lakes, Illinois, during a battle
stations/general quarters drill. The drill was covered by local media, and
the photo-op was presented to Jenkins by his recruit division commander
upon graduating...*

*Chief Hospital Corpsman Jesseca Anderson as a
hospital corpsman third class, April 2011, on maiden
voyage of amphibious transport dock ship USS
Green Bay (LPD 20)*



*Jay Langwith, retired ITCM (SW/AW)
from clockwise...
returning from 2009 deployment on USS
John C Stennis (CVN 74), at Pearl
Harbor officiating a reenlistment circa
2015 and as senior enlisted leader 2014,
assigned Pacific Command (Navy
element), Camp Smith, Hawai'i.*





Chris Angstead (L), as a HM1 (MCD/PJ/FMF/SW), with 3rd Platoon, 1st Force Reconnaissance Company, 1st Surveillance, Reconnaissance, Intelligence Group, 1 MEF, 1993-94, amphibious transport dock USS Denver (LPD 9), before Operation Restore Hope, Somalia and the after effects of Operation Task Force Ranger.

*CMC, Navy Medicine Education Training Command
CMC, Recruit Training Center Great Lakes
CMC, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Pacific
CMC, USS Gridley, (DDG 101)
CMC, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command (5th Fleet)
CMC, Naval Medical Center/Navy Medicine East
CMC, 3D Force Service Support Group
Naval Diving City & Salvage Training Center, Panama
The White House Medical Unit
1st Force Reconnaissance Company
Special Operations Training Group, 1st MEF
1st Battalion, 7th Marines, 1st Marine Division
3d Battalion, 5th Marines, 1st Marine Division
Naval Hospital Whidbey Island
Recruit Training Center, San Diego*

Francisco Sandoval, Boot Camp 1983...During his 20-year career, Store Keeper 1st Class Sandoval served at Admin Support Unit Bahrain, Naval Air Station Kingsville, Texas, fast combat support ship USS Rainier (AOE 7), Pearl Harbor, replenishment oiler USS Kansas City (AOR 3) and NHB.

*HMC (FME) SFIDC
(Ret.) Jesus A.
Ledesma (middle)*



Heather Moran, Occupational Health RN with NMRTU Everett, has served 32 years in the Army and is still going strong, from clockwise; 'amazing' training at Ft. Hunter Liggett (Calif.), May 2019; helping with emergency surgery, Al Udeid, Qatar, July 2015, and upon arriving home from deployment to completely surprise her children on opening day at Safeco Field, April 2016.



Amylisa Myers, MSN, RNC-OB, with Northwest Beginnings Family Birth Center; from 2003 assigned to NHB's Fleet Hospital deployed to Rota, Spain in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation Enduring Freedom, where she was promoted from ensign to lieutenant junior grade (below) and with other team members upon dismantling and packing up the 250-bed fleet hospital set...



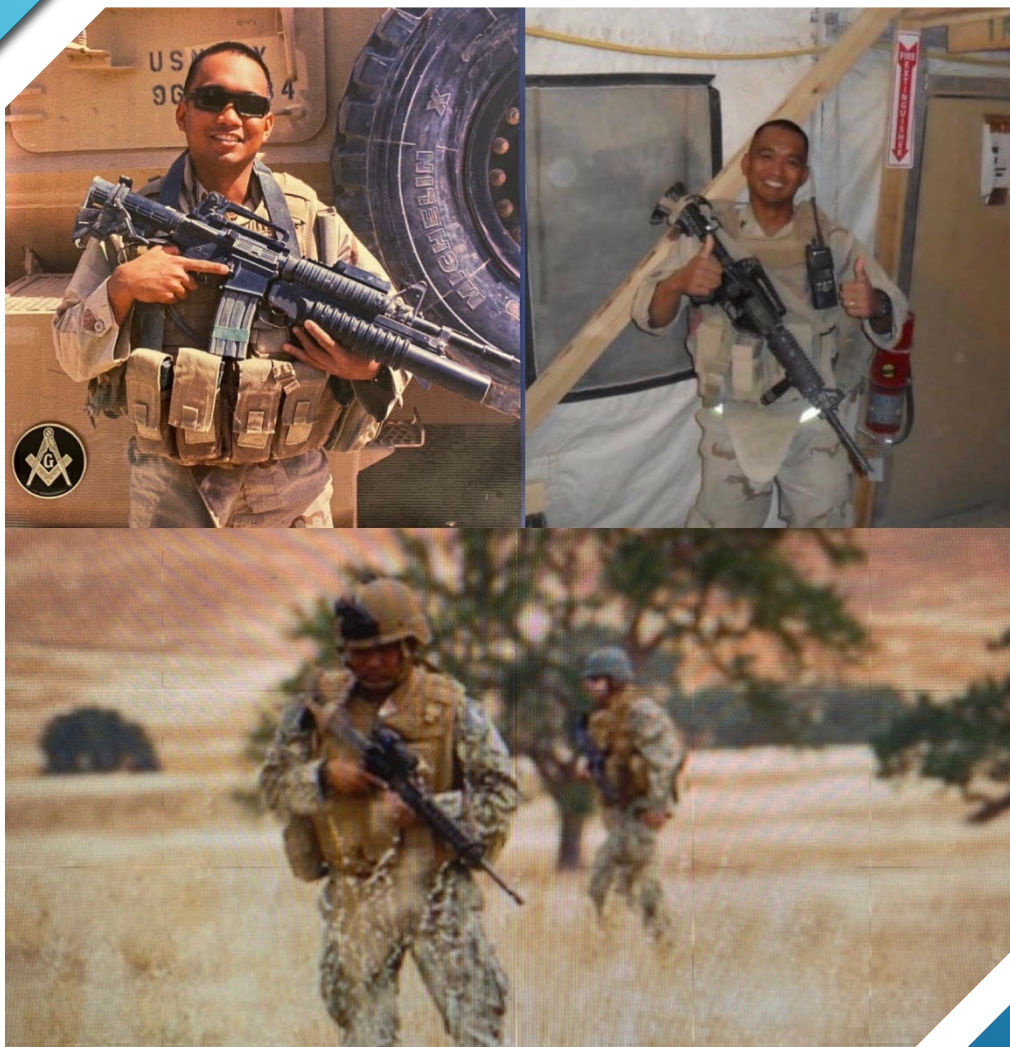


Dr. Erin Patterson, physical therapist at NMRTU Bangor; back in the day...(L) taking in flight ops on USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75), (bottom Left) Marine 1st Lt. Charles Olson, on Guam; as Cmdr. Patterson and Lt. Cmdr. Olson with USS Enterprise as backdrop...





► *Maria Gonzalez, NHB discharge planner, from back in the day...(L) U.S. Coast Guard, 1987 on Governors Island (New York Harbor) and (below R) after being commissioned in 1992...*



*EQUIPMENT OPERATION 2ND CLASS (SCW)
HILBERT ATENDIDO, NMCB 5, ALFA COMPANY
2009-2010 CAMP LEATHERNECK, HELMAND
PROVINCE, AFGHANISTAN*

Linda McCaulla, from her U.S. Air Force days as a senior airman assigned as a command post controller, Tinker Air Base, Oklahoma, from 2003 to 2006. ... She was the eyes and ears for the base and wing commanders...



*Dr. Elizabeth Gray,
with Marine Fighter
Attack Squadron 314
(known as the Black
Knights), Carrier Air
Wing 9, deployed
onboard nuclear
aircraft carrier USS
John C. Stennis,
2001-2002*



Timothy Douglas Stewart, command evaluator/Medical Inspector General compliance officer...back in the day...

HM3 A. D. Nash
HM3 J. Nimmo
HM3 R. Noraas
HM3 D. H. Selby
HM3. C. J. Shilhan
HM3 T. D. Stewart



Stewart cited for heroism in mishap

HM3 Timothy Douglas Stewart, U.S. Navy, aboard the USS Midway, was recently nominated for advancement to Hospital Corpsman Second Class under the the Command Advancement Program.

The recommendation reads: "HM3 Stewart has consistently demonstrated an exceptionally high degree of military and professional excellence. Petty Officer Stewart has established himself as a role model to the entire military medical field. He is the caliber of petty officer who instills pride and professionalism in all who encounter him.

Petty Officer Stewart's performance and unselfishness for his own personal safety during the recent mishap at sea as nothing less than superhuman. As the Medical Department's Flying Squad Corpsman he

entered the scene of the casualty immediately following the first explosion to initiate life saving care and provided the immediate evacuation of the wounded to safety. Despite pending imminent peril to himself and the rest of the rescue team Petty Officer Stewart continued to ensure that his shipmates were taken to safety. The last of the initial casualties were evacuated from the forth deck by means of fireman carries, after which Petty Officer Stewart was blown across the third deck berthing compartment by the second explosion. However he seemed to draw extra courage to continue his efforts until all the initially injured were evacuated.

Petty Officer Stewart's heroism has been recognized and rewarded by his nomination for

the Navy and Marine Corps Medal.

Petty Officer Stewart has excelled in every job assignment since reporting to USS Midway. He has been assigned to many problem work centers of the Medical Department and has used his tireless leadership style and relentless desire for perfection to get things back on track. He has been labeled the departmental "troubleshooter". His potential is virtually limitless and he is strongly recommended and deserving of meritorious advancement under the Command Advancement Program."

Stewart, a 1984 graduate of Payette High School, is the son of Don and Lueann Stewart of Payette. He graduated from Treasure Valley Community College before enlisting in the Navy.





*Master Chief
Personnel
Specialist
Andrew
Guenther was
assigned to
NATO Training
Mission
Afghanistan,
Combined
Security
Transition
Command, in
Kabul, circa
2010.*

Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Trish Skinner, July 2001, Sicily, Italy at Naval Air Station II Branch Medical Clinic as part of Fleet Hospital Eight out of Rota Spain supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom, with Preventive Medicine department convening with visiting German military officers...





Cmdr. Louise Nellums, March 2010, returning from Operation Unified Response, providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief following a catastrophic earthquake measuring 7.1 which caused an estimated 300,000 lives.

*Cmdr. Haley
Maiatico, back
in the day...*



Retired Sgt. 1st Class Kenneth Baer, NHB Medical Records, served 24 years, including three Middle East deployments, including to Hit, Iraq in Anbar Province...he was a cannon crewmember, human resources specialist and combat medic, stationed in Germany and stateside.





► *Joshua Sandvig, on U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Midgett (WHEC 726) operating in the Pacific Ocean conducting such missions as search and rescue, maritime laws enforcement, marine environmental protection and military readiness (although the primate does not specifically fall under such official readiness needs...)*



Edward Schulz, Outpatient Pharmacy lead, on amphibious transport dock ship USS Cleveland (LPD 7) during Pacific Partnership, packing anti-malarial medications for one of the many medical missions to the far-flung islands of the South Pacific.



*Retired Navy Medical Corps, Capt. Randall
G. Kelley , submitted for HMC Mark Wright*

HEROES UNAWARE

*I first saw him on a park bench
I've seen him every day
Sitting in a shady grove
Where my children come to play
Sometimes he feeds the birds and squirrels
Or whittles little toys
Sometimes he just sits and smiles
At the laughing girls and boys
And I never paid him any mind
Till one day just this year
I noticed that he wore a frown
And on his cheek; a tear. Well I asked him
why he seemed so down
He looked up, began to say
I lost half my friends 50 years ago today
He told me of the terror
As he fought to reach dry land
By the time the beachhead was secure
Half his friends lay in the sand
That was just in one long day*

*He fought on for 4 years more
And the 50 years from then to now
Have not dimmed His sights of war
He said they have reunions
Just to keep in touch and share
And for each comrade who has gone on
They leave an empty chair*

*Well, His park bench has been empty now
About 6 months or so
And if I'd never took the time
Then I never would've known
That sitting on that simple bench
With bread crumbs and little toys
Was a man who gave his all
To guarantee my daily joys*

*So give thanks to all the men and women
Who are still here or have gone before
And made the highest sacrifice
In both Peace time and in War
Because they bought our freedom
Paid their own blood, sweat, and tears
Then endured the heartache of those empty chairs
For all these years*

*So please do not ignore them
Or speed by without a care
Cause you never know
When you might pass by
A hero, unaware*

